



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029**

January 5, 2009

Ms. Diane Ratcliff
Maryland Transit Administration
6 Saint Paul Street, 9th Floor
Baltimore Maryland 21202

Re: Red Line Corridor Transit Study, Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Baltimore Maryland, September 2008 (CEQ No. 20080385)

Dear Ms. Ratcliff,

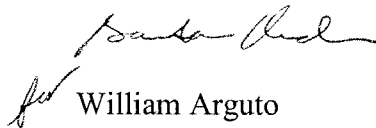
In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Alternatives Analysis/ Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) for the Red Line Corridor Transit Study, referenced above. The document is complete and written in a manner easily readable by the public and agencies. The document is rated by EPA as LO-1; LO indicating that the EPA lacks any objections to all alternatives. The numerical rating of 1 indicates that EPA believes the information presented in the document is complete. A summary of EPA's rating criteria is attached.

The AA/DEIS evaluates social, historical and environmental impacts of a range of alternatives: a baseline no build alternative, a Transportation System Management (upgrades of existing services), six variations of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT A-F; alternatives with slightly different routes, amount of dedicated transitway, tunneling and grade separation), and four variations of Light Rail Transit (LRT A-D; alternatives with different amount of tunneling and grade separation). Environmental impacts of each alternative are generally minor. Wetland impacts range for the build alternatives from 0 to 0.16 acres, stream impacts from 12 to 456 linear feet, forest impacts of between 4.86 acres to 26.31 acres and park impacts range from 0 to 0.1 acres. Table 6-1 presents a useful summary of impacts; reference to it in Chapter 4 would be helpful. EPA supports evaluation and incorporation of design that can potentially reduce environmental impacts such as pervious surface for the LRT transitway, low impact development BMPs for park and rides that may be included in the infrastructure project, research into low emissions vehicles for the BRT option (possibility of partial zero emissions hybrid buses), and low emissions equipment use during construction. Maintaining small or further minimization of impacts to streams and wetlands should be pursued through design. Design or right of way purchase that can protect or enhance stream buffer or floodplain function may be considered.

Environmental Justice analysis identified populations of concern, potential impacts and sources of concern during project implementation. The evaluation was thorough and conclusions sound. A short indirect and cumulative effects (ICE) analysis was provided in the document. Discussion of cumulative effects could be improved by indicating if any specific foreseeable projects are planned in the area of the ICE study boundary that may impact resources (cultural or natural) that are affected by the proposed project. It would be helpful to include a map showing the geographic boundary determined for the ICE analysis; the boundary was not clearly identified by the text. Trend analysis of the resources of concern was not discussed for the selected timeframe of the ICE study.

Thank you for providing EPA with the opportunity to review this project. If you have questions regarding these comments, the staff contact for this project is Ms. Barbara Rudnick; she can be reached at 215-814-3322.

Sincerely,



William Arguto
NEPA Team Leader
Office of Environmental Programs

Attachment



RATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ACTION

- **LO (Lack of Objections)** The review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the preferred alternative. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposed action.
- **EC (Environmental Concerns)** The review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact.
- **EO (Environmental Objections)** The review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to adequately protect the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). The basis for environmental Objections can include situations:
 1. *Where an action might violate or be inconsistent with achievement or maintenance of a national environmental standard;*
 2. *Where the Federal agency violates its own substantive environmental requirements that relate to EPA's areas of jurisdiction or expertise;*
 3. *Where there is a violation of an EPA policy declaration;*
 4. *Where there are no applicable standards or where applicable standards will not be violated but there is potential for significant environmental degradation that could be corrected by project modification or other feasible alternatives; or*
 5. *Where proceeding with the proposed action would set a precedent for future actions that collectively could result in significant environmental impacts.*
- **EU (Environmentally Unsatisfactory)** The review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that EPA believes the proposed action must not proceed as proposed. The basis for an environmentally unsatisfactory determination consists of identification of environmentally objectionable impacts as defined above and one or more of the following conditions:
 1. *The potential violation of or inconsistency with a national environmental standard is substantive and/or will occur on a long-term basis;*
 2. *There are no applicable standards but the severity, duration, or geographical scope of the impacts associated with the proposed action warrant special attention; or*
 3. *The potential environmental impacts resulting from the proposed action are of national importance because of the threat to national environmental resources or to environmental policies.*

RATING THE ADEQUACY OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

- **1 (Adequate)** The draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.
- **2 (Insufficient Information)** The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the proposal. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.
- **3 (Inadequate)** The draft EIS does not adequately assess the potentially significant environmental impacts of the proposal, or the reviewer has identified new, reasonably available, alternatives, that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant

environmental impacts. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. This rating indicates EPA's belief that the draft EIS does not meet the purposes of NEPA and/or the Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS.